

Clinics will also be offered at the festival to help developing musicians improve their abilities and talents. Jazz students have a unique opportunity to meet with and learn from some of the most talented musicians and educators in the Nation.

Jazz has come a long way since I first listened to the music as a boy on the radio in Searchlight. This distinct musical form has developed from its humble origins in early 20th century New Orleans to touch music fans of all ages and backgrounds today. The personalities of the early days of Jazz continue to influence today's artists across the musical spectrum.

I wish the host and participants of the Reno Jazz Festival continued success in bringing Jazz to all members of the community.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT KENNETH LOCKER

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I rise to express my sympathy over the loss of U.S. Army SSG Kenneth Locker of Burwell, NE. Sergeant Locker was killed on April 23 in Diyala province, Iraq. He was 28 years old.

Sergeant Locker graduated from Burwell High School in 1997. He enlisted with the Army while he was still in high school. Bob Lee, his high school math teacher, said that after he enlisted, Sergeant Locker became a much more focused young man whose grades shot up.

After high school, Sergeant Locker spent 3 years in the Army, 2 years with the National Guard, and eventually reenlisted with the Army. He had been in Iraq since August 2006 with the Army's historic 82nd Airborne Division.

Sergeant Locker was previously injured in Iraq by a land mine. He was awarded a Purple Heart and lived with shrapnel in his neck. Thousands of brave men and women like Sergeant Locker are serving in Iraq.

In addition to his life as a soldier, Sergeant Locker was father to three young sons and believed he was making a safer world for his children. He is also survived by his father Ken, two sisters, and a half sister and half brother. We are proud of his service to our country.

I ask my colleagues to join me and all Americans in honoring SSG Kenneth Locker.

FIRST LIEUTENANT KEVIN GASPERS

I rise to express my sympathy over the loss of U.S. Army 1LT Kevin Gaspers of Hastings, NE. Lieutenant Gaspers was killed on April 23 in Diyala province, Iraq. He was 26 years old.

Lieutenant Gaspers was a 2000 graduate of St. Cecilia High School in Hastings, where he wrestled and played football. After graduation, he attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and enrolled in the ROTC program. As a senior at UNL, Lieutenant Gaspers was selected to lead the ROTC cadet's battalion. His colleagues remember him as low-key and professional in his leadership style. He earned his Army officer's commission in 2005, along with a degree from UNL in accounting.

Lieutenant Gaspers was a paratrooper with the Army's historic 82nd Airborne Division based at Fort Bragg, N.C. He had been serving in Iraq since August 2006.

Lieutenant Gaspers is survived by his parents, John and Pam, and sisters Katie and Audrey. We are proud of his service to our country.

I ask my colleagues to join me and all Americans in honoring 1LT Kevin Gaspers.

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I regret that on April 25, I was unable to vote on certain provisions and passage of S. 761, the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act. I wish to address these votes, so that the people of the great State of Kansas, who elected me to serve them as U.S. Senator, may know my position.

Regarding vote No. 142, on amendment No. 930, I would not have voted in favor of this amendment. My vote would not have altered the final result of this vote.

Regarding vote No. 143, on amendment No. 918, I would not have voted in favor of this amendment. My vote would not have altered the final result of this vote.

Regarding vote No. 144, on amendment No. 921, I would have voted in favor of this amendment. My vote would not have altered the final result of this vote.

Regarding vote No. 145, on amendment No. 922, I would have voted in favor of this amendment. My vote would not have altered the final result of this vote.

Regarding vote No. 146, on passage of S. 761, the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act, I would have voted in favor of passage of this act. My vote would not have altered the final result of this vote.

#### HOLD ON INTERIOR DEPARTMENT NOMINATION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today I have placed a hold on the nomination of R. Lyle Laverty to be Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the U.S. Interior Department. Consistent with my policy of publicly announcing whenever I place a hold on a nomination, I want to notify my colleagues of my objection to allowing Mr. Laverty's nomination to be considered under a unanimous-consent agreement, and to take a few minutes to explain to my colleagues why I am doing so.

The Interior Department has suffered no shortage of scandals in recent years. To name just two of the most egregious: Its former No. 2 official, a Deputy Interior Secretary who previously had been a coal industry lobbyist, pleaded guilty earlier this year to fel-

ony obstruction of justice for lying about his relationship with disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff. And we discovered that the Minerals Management Service, an agency within the Interior Department, has known for years about flawed drilling leases that allow companies to pay no royalties on valuable oil and gas they take from Federal land in the Gulf of Mexico, but the MMS did nothing until news reports brought the facts to the public last year. Indeed, the MMS has silenced auditors on its staff who tried to blow the whistle on companies not paying their fair share.

"Simply stated, short of a crime, anything goes at the highest levels of the Interior Department," the Interior Department's inspector general has warned us.

Last year, when Dirk Kempthorne was nominated to be Secretary of the Interior and he appeared before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for confirmation, I secured from him a pledge. He told me that he would reform that troubled department and introduce a higher ethical standard. The scandals would stop coming.

However, in late March, the inspector general once again released a scathingly critical report warning us about bad things happening at the Interior Department. This time the subject was Julie MacDonald, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Mr. Laverty would be the immediate supervisor of the position Ms. MacDonald held.

In detail, the inspector general told us two things about Ms. MacDonald. One, she violated Federal rules by leaking internal Fish and Wildlife Service records to business groups actively challenging the Government's environmental rulemaking process. In the process, she has been undermining her own agency's cases in court. Two, without any formal education in the natural sciences, she has bullied and threatened FWS scientists and forced changes in their reports to suit her own political and personal agendas. FWS attorneys no longer will sign off on reports if they know the reports passed through her hands because they no longer are certain of the accuracy.

This sort of conduct is simply unacceptable. If you agree to work in the Interior Department, your loyalty should be with the Interior Department and protecting this country's natural treasures. Ms. MacDonald's loyalty lay elsewhere.

The inspector general sent his report on Ms. MacDonald to the Interior Department for administrative action more than a month ago. The Interior Department had no public comment. Only after I announced that I would place a hold on Mr. Laverty's nomination did Ms. MacDonald resign. That removes her from the equation, but not the atmosphere that allowed her to operate as she did for so long.